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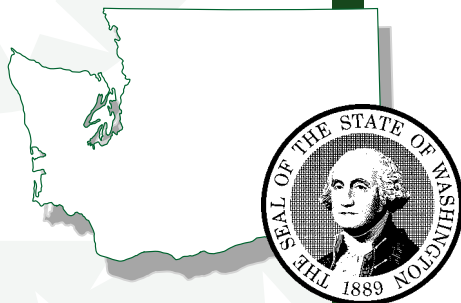
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Legislative Update - 2004 Mid-Session Report

From Rep. Kirk Pearson - 39th District

February 2004

Dear friends,

Now that the Legislature is nearly midway through the 60-day session which began Jan.12, I wanted to provide a brief look at some of the issues being discussed.

Last year, you may recall that we closed a \$2.7 billion budget deficit without increasing taxes or cutting vital services. This year, the Legislature's primary item of business is to adopt a supplemental budget.

In addition, we are working on policies that will create new jobs in Washington and build on our success of landing the Boeing 7E7 in our state.

This report offers a brief glimpse of these and other goals of the 2004 legislative session.

As usual, please feel free to contact me any time you have questions or comments.

Rep. Kirk Pearson

2004 Session Goals

- ✓ A sustainable budget with no tax increases
- ✓ Create new jobs through tax reductions and reducing regulations
- ✓ Affordable, accessible health care by controlling costs through insurance and liability reforms
- ✓ Increase public safety through tougher laws against criminals

Rep. Kirk Pearson

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Bringing jobs to the 39th District

The tax incentive package I voted for last session was a large reason why Boeing decided to build the 7E7 in Everett. That will mean many new jobs for the 39th District. Also, the three-year period of modest tax relief for B.F. Goodrich Aviation Technical Services in Everett will save jobs. However, unemployment still remains high in King, Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom counties. It's important that we continue to do what we can to improve our economy and help businesses, especially small businesses, create jobs.

To help foster economic recovery, we're looking at several options, including: increasing small business tax credits, reforming the workers' compensation program, lifting excessive regulatory burdens, and extending tax credits that companies are using to provide jobs.

Supplemental budget - Stay the course

Although state government's financial picture is better than this time last year, now is not the time to commit to big spending programs. We need to adopt a supplemental budget to cover spending changes that couldn't have been anticipated when the budget was adopted last year – things like higher K-12 school enrollments, or the cost of fighting last summer's wildfires. Our economy is still fragile. We should not spend any more taxpayers' money than absolutely necessary. Instead, let's be smart, stay the course, and work toward building up the state's reserves to protect taxpayers in the future.



Rep. Kirk Pearson discusses job creation, fiscal accountability on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Protect affordable health care through fair liability reforms

We are rapidly losing doctors and access to health care in the 39th District because of the high costs of medical malpractice insurance. It's no wonder that premiums are up. Under Washington law, a health-care provider could be required to pay 100 percent of all damages under a multi-party lawsuit, even if he or she is found legally responsible for only 10 percent or less. I am very concerned that justice is being lost from our civil justice system. That's why I am supporting reforms that will benefit service providers, consumers and citizens in general. We have to get a handle on the unreasonable costs and settlements, and ensure through our reforms that we will lose no more doctors or health services.

Cracking down on meth

The Department of Ecology reported 1,694 methamphetamine labs in Washington in 2002. In many of those labs, children were found. Many of our local communities have banded together to fight this terrible problem. In Olympia, I have co-sponsored legislation that would make meth manufacturing a "strike" under the state's "Three Strikes" law. It's time to make the penalties larger than the profits.

More tools to fight eco-terrorism

Once again, eco-terrorists have struck in our district, releasing nearly 10,000 mink in August from a farm in Sultan. Some were run over by cars, while others attacked nearby domestic animals. Although 90 percent of the mink were recovered, it continues to underscore the need to bring eco-terrorists to justice. Two years ago, the Legislature passed a bill I introduced to create exceptional penalties for certain kinds of criminal sabotage. This year, I am introducing legislation that would allow perpetrators of these crimes to be sued, with the victims collecting three times the damages of their loss. I am also supporting legislation to include exceptional penalties against eco-terrorists who target the timber and fur industries.

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